

ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER: A Way to Sustained Salience: Cultural Identity, Social Networks, and Language Attitude in Lorain Puerto Rican English

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Cultural identity, social networks, and language attitude have all been understood to play crucial roles in motivating the results of language contact. This research project explores how these factors interact to explain the current linguistic context of the Puerto Rican community in Lorain, OH. Lorain, a mid-sized city in the American Midwest, is home to a vibrant Puerto Rican community and thus serves as a useful context for the study of Puerto Rican communities and Puerto Rican English (PRE), as well as language contact more generally. This research paper validates the researcher's hypothesis that social networks and language attitude are implicated in the rate of realization of the markers of PRE, and demonstrates how these factors motivate the current linguistic nature of the Puerto Rican community in Lorain, OH.

This research analyzes a series of audio recorded sociolinguistic interviews conducted in Lorain, OH in March, 2015. In these interviews, members of the Puerto Rican community (n=8), including men and women, between the ages of 35 and 60, were asked a series of questions which provide insight into their attitude towards Spanish as well as the nature of their social networks. In addition, the participants were each asked to recount a personal narrative. The recorded narratives were coded in order to stratify the sample population according to the

following independent variables: gender, age, attitude towards Spanish, and cultural identity. Attitude towards Spanish was determined on a continuum based on the participant's responses to a series of statements regarding the salience of Spanish in the current Lorain context. Cultural identity was understood to be a function of the density and multiplexity of each participant's social networks. For each of these variables participants were assigned a score along a one-to-five continuum. Each participant's speech was also coded for the occurrence of two dependent variables: the realization of morpheme initial [ð] as [d] and the insertion of Spanish lexical items.

Increased density and multiplexity of social networks as well as a more positive attitude towards Spanish seemed to contribute to an increased rate of realization of the dependent variables. Further qualitative analysis identified a set of four generalizations that seemed to interact to explain the current linguistic nature of the community. Each of these generalizations are considered in detail. In addition, this analysis motivates an account of how these generalizations work together to explain how cultural identity, social networks, and attitude towards Spanish explain the current nature of the contact context.

This project contributes, specifically, to three gaps in the existing literature. First, while PRE has been studied in significant detail on the island and in the American Northeast, including Wolfram (1971, 1973), Fishman (1971), Walsh (1994), and Zentella (1997), there has been limited exploration of PRE in other contexts. In addition, Puerto Rican communities in the American Midwest have not been sufficiently described. Finally, while cultural identity and social networks have been linked in the literature (Milroy, 1987), and the impact of these concepts on language variation has been noted by Labov (1963, 1972), Hazen (2002), and Zentella (1997), the explicit connection between the two concepts as well as how they impact language contact contexts merits further exploration. This project addresses these gaps by

exploring cultural identity, social networks, and language attitudes in the Lorain Puerto Rican context.